

142. YUL BRYNNER'S EGYPTIAN HELMET FROM "THE TEN COMMANDMENTS". (Paramount, 1956) Ramses II blue battle helmet made of aluminum with gold trim, worn by Yul Brynner as he chases the children of Israel across the desert to the Red Sea. A spectacular and highly recognizable piece from this Paramount epic. Comes with an image of Brynner wearing the helmet in the film. \$10,000 - 12000



143. EXTRAORDINARY PROP TEN COMMANDMENT TABLETS FROM "THE TEN COMMANDMENTS". (Paramount, 1956) De Mille's greatest film, and his last, has joined the pantheon of those films that are revered from generation to generation and whose theme transcends the drama portrayed. It has become an annual staple of the Easter season and the few items that have become available from it have become indeed treasured; none more so than the actual tablets "written by the finger of God". There are few props in the history of film that are so easily recognizable on sight as to their use.

These prop tablets come from the family of the man who made them for the production nearly 45 years ago. The family has provided a notarized letter attesting to this fact, along with copies of his Scenic Painters Guild Card from local #729 in Hollywood, California. His widow states that they have been sitting in their garage for forty three years, nearly forgotten. They are made of an early resin material molded to a wooden form 24 inches in height and 11 inches wide. As they were carved with "fire bolts" they are slightly irregular as to their shape and have molded chips, craters and dings. Each has different Sanskrit style characters in line to represent each of the Commandments in the ancient language. The left one is noted for having only three characters in it's first line as opposed to the right which has four. There is water staining on both, almost equally 3-4 inches from the bottom from their idle years in the garage. Much of the red finish is gone although they have remaining streaks in spots and in the interstices of the letters. The reverse show signs of buffing with a rotary sander as an effort was made later to strip them down to their bare elements, possibly for restoration, but more likely to allow them to lay flat for framing. Other than loss of finish on the obverse there is no latent damage there.

Careful analysis of the unique molded "damage", i.e., the dings, chips and craters, coupled with a frame by frame study of the film show that, as it is with most important props, more than one set of tablets were made and used in the production. Mr. De Mille wrote in his autobiography, with great pride, that he had two tablets cut in stone from Mt. Sinai itself, the historic origin of the Biblical originals. These were used for some of the most famous publicity stills of Heston, as Moses holding them; they are quite easy to spot as to their texture, grain and lack of side seams. The prop ones, those made of the resin or fiberglass material, and hence somewhat lighter in weight, can be seen in two distinct scenes in the film. Firstly, up high on Mt. Sinai, where Moses watches in stunned awe as the column of fire that represents the Lord, flings fingers of flame into the flat rock surface burning the symbols into the stone, and just



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after when Moses carries the tablets down to where Joshua awaits him.

Whether a continuity error or retake, the second set, those Moses lifts high over his head and hurls at the golden calf, are markedly different. As we see the tablets cool and the smoke subside, it is clear the left tablet has a large crater molded on the upper left side between ten and eleven o'clock. The right one has a side ding at three o'clock and a series of top, left of center craters, one of which is quite deep, as is another at one o'clock. They both exhibit bottom left-hand corner shallow chips. (see photos) These are the pair offered here.

The ones that he carries down the mount have completely different series of distinguishing marks (see photo). One has a chip at the lower left corner and a rounded right lower corner, and the other has two chips at the lower left which are markedly different in shape from the ones presented here. That pair was sold by Christie's New York in June of 1985 for \$81,700. At that time they claimed there were six pairs made for the production. That may well be, but the film evidence shows THREE PAIR or six in total.



The third pair shows up in posed publicity stills of Heston in numerous poses holding the prop and stone ones. Their markings, too are different from the rest. In photos where Mr. Heston is "holding" what appear to be the real stone ones, we never see the bottoms of them, i.e. what is really supporting their weight, which can be compared to holding the weight of two headstones for a grave — not something easily hoisted over one's head and tossed fifteen feet. Yet, when posing with the prop tablets he easily holds them in one hand, resting against his arm with merely three fingers (see photos) used in support. It is evident this pair differs from the other two by their unique damage and marks as well (see photos). Other posed stills show a mixing of the pairs where you have the left tablet from the "fire bolt" sequence held with the right tablet from the later scene. In others, they are being carried one over the other whereas the bottom is totally obscured. In stills we obtained that were seemingly the exact same sequence of "Woe unto thee...Israel" where only the travel of Heston's arm can be discerned, a closer examination shows that in one he has the left tablet on top and in the other it is the right one in view (see photos).

What is known is that this is only the second pair to come to sale and provides a rare opportunity to own and covet one of the holy grails of film collectibles with an impeccable paper trail. Tablets are extremely weathered, as they have been exposed to the elements for 43 years since the film's release, and show remnants of the original earth-tone brown/red patina. **\$40,000 - 60,000**

